Journal 4
Welcome to the fourth and very special edition of the INTERIOR-iD journal 2016. This year we celebrate the tenth anniversary of our London based bespoke joinery company. It seems impossible to believe that a decade has passed since I started INTERIOR-iD from the bedroom of my Notting Hill flat. Today we are a respected international company ranking in the top echelon of luxury bespoke joinery companies in the UK.

In this issue Charu Gandhi, founder and CEO of Elicyon, reveals the impressive list of ventures undertaken since she established her company in June 2014. Turn to page 4 to view the work carried out by INTERIOR-iD on Project Picasso, a stunning five-bedroom apartment in One Hyde Park.

Darren Size, Managing Director of Sizebreed, tells the story of the bold and enterprising start to the business and how it has risen to become one of the most prestigious building contractors in this country in just seven years. Discover how INTERIOR-iD have worked with Sizebreed on a vast 24,000sq.ft. house in Belgrave Square on pages 16–19.

The architect Richard Bell, talks about his lifelong love affair with contemporary, stark, minimal architecture and design. In this article we unveil the exclusive project in Chelsea that INTERIOR-iD collaborated on with him on page 26–29.

Throughout the last year we have continued to dedicate ourselves to becoming one of the most highly respected bespoke joinery companies in the UK. Our regular feature, Behind the scenes, pages 32–35, show cases our remarkable level of skill, services and craftsmanship. Learn about our unique and exceptional sample showroom and the innovative showcase cabinets that precisely demonstrates the level of skill, superior quality and the vast resources in the world of bespoke kitchens and cabinetry. Excitingly, we have established a new division, Haute Couture Kitchens, offering turnkey services from creation to completion of unique tailor-made kitchens.

And this summer we launched our new website which demonstrates just how far INTERIOR-iD has progressed in the last decade. Take a look!

We hope you enjoy reading this latest issue,

Bernd Radaschitz
Co-Founder and CEO, INTERIOR-iD
INTERIOR DESIGNER PROFILE —
Elicyon

Not far from London, nestling in a highly desirable part of the English countryside, sits the imposing shell of a newly built 23,000sq.ft. house. As you read this article, one woman and her team of interior architects and designers will be overseeing the final stages of the meticulous transformation of this bare architectural structure into a magnificent home ready for the owners and their family to move in by the end of this year. No detail will have been overlooked, the quality of workmanship will be unparalleled, exquisite finishing touches will be individual and incomparable, for this is the haute couture of architecture and interior design. Everything has been commissioned and custom made to reflect the personality of the owners.

So, who is the remarkable interior architect responsible for this immense project and the fulfilment of her client’s powerful vision? Step forward thirty six year old, Charu Gandhi, who perhaps surprisingly only established her prospering business, Elicyon in June 2014. Although Elicyon may be in the embryonic stages of business, Charu herself has worked in the world of architecture and interiors since graduating from London’s highly respected Architects Association in 2004. Her client list already reads like an international version of the Sunday Times Rich List. This is a world where non-disclosure documents are a totally normal part of the process and discretion is paramount. No client names are ever mentioned, precise locations are never discussed and budgets are a forbidden topic.

Charu openly admits that when discussing this latest commission it can only be referred to as Project Pinehurst. Even the nationality of the client is off limits. “I can’t give away too much, discretion at this level is taken for granted. The level of trust between my team, the client and me is our major priority. A developer built the shell of the house, but we are doing everything else inside. The client has incredible taste and has been very generous in how much of our design influence they have let us bring to the scheme.

“On a project like this, the sky is the limit and what I like about our clients is that they are incredibly mature about what they want. These are not people who stumbled into having this lifestyle. They have stayed in the best hotels, on the most exquisite of yachts and they know what works for them. I find most of my clients so inspiring, as they are so successful, just watching how they operate is extraordinary.”

Unlike many people, Charu knew from the age of 11 that she wanted to be an architect. “I always loved design and being creative; the clichés of building Lego and creating origami all hold true, but for me the turning point was when my parents bought a plot of land to build a new house in India. They hired a young female architect, Sujata Kohli, who had just returned from Florence. She was only 27 at the time and I was 10, and she was utterly inspirational. I found her and the process of design so inspirational that I wanted to be her, to do what she did. She became my mentor and actually persuaded me to come and study at the Architectural Association in London, rather than returning to India for my university studies.

After graduating from the Architectural Association, Charu accepted an offer to teach part time but soon realised that, “academia wasn’t for me and I was raring to get my teeth into practising.” So, she returned to Charles Barclay Architects in South London where she had worked during her degree. A move to Allies & Morrison in Southwark working primarily on master-plan residential work followed. After six years she recognised a need for change, “I wanted to work in a design company where the projects were faster paced, more dynamic and entering. A friend worked at Candy & Candy, the introduction was made and after a round of interviews I was offered the job of Design Manager. Unquestionably, the years I spent at Candy & Candy helped me re-engage with my love for design. I was soon promoted to Project Manager and offered a more dynamic role on the private clients team pitching for new business and running a team myself.

Right: Bedside table featuring marble, polished high gloss front drawers in mother-of-pearl finish.
“Then in 2013 Candy & Candy fundamentally changed their business model and so, on very good terms and in a very positive sense, I started to look at other opportunities. Morpheus, a development company with a construction side, was considering creating an in-house design team. I came on board with the task of setting up that division. It was a bit like being an entrepreneur, within the framework of an existing company. I was there for a year and grew the design team from two to fifteen, so it was hugely successful. But the experience ignited my entrepreneurial spirit and I took the decision to leave Morpheus and I founded Elicyon in June 2014.

“We are a small company with a very comprehensive, well-rounded, balanced team of twelve, we don’t have a B team, there is only the A team, so we can offer a very comprehensive service. Geographically we are currently working in London, New York, and Dubai. We have just finished a project in Kuwait, we are in talks to commence work in India and Saudi Arabia and our client list includes private clients to repeat work with developers. Budget is never the sole driver; to be creatively engaged is the key decision to taking on a project.

“At a recent exhibition at the V&A about luxury what really struck me was the text on the walls that said, “luxury is defined by time and space.” I really sense that from our clients. They want spacious homes that create a feeling of luxury and what that means to each of them is completely different. It is this opportunity to have rooms in your home that cater to you. For me it would be a library and a garden. Each client has his or her own unique requirements. They are incredibly dynamic people with complex and difficult lives and we help them create that moment of stillness, creating a refuge, a place to stop. For some of them the only time when they stop and spend time with their families is when they come home for three days from business trips.”

“Most heartening has been the support we have received from the industry over the last two years; from people like Bernd Radaschitz at INTERIOR-iD, from major building contractors and project managers. It’s a huge compliment when a professional company comes to you to say we would like to work with you again or to put you forward for a commission. There’s no doubt though that the biggest compliment comes from repeat clients. “Initially I met Bernd when I was at Candy & Candy, and then worked with him again on a project at Morpheus. The first project he worked on for Elicyon was one called Project Picasso in One Hyde Park. INTERIOR-iD created the joinery for the entire property to a very high specification using incredible materials, featuring beautiful details and they did a fantastic job. So far we have collaborated on three projects with them, but we are hoping to do a lot more.

“Bernd was one of the first people I spoke to when I was setting up Elicyon. He introduced me to lawyers, a branding agency, and his insurance broker. He has been incredibly kind and generous to me. The Elicyon team knows his team well. Everyone at INTERIOR-iD is approachable, professional and their studio is close to ours. There’s a long list of reasons why there is such an incredible synergy between our companies but it’s compounded by a shared interest in white wine! He introduced me to Austrian Riesling, so I will forever be grateful for that,” she says with a smile.

“Joinery is very much an artisan skill, perfected by centuries of craftsmanship. In a way you could say it’s almost archaic. But what is amazing about INTERIOR-iD is that they have retained the links with their heritage and
built a multi-generational company on those foundations. But to appreciate their approach to modernism you only have to take one look at the Austrian factory with its superb high specification machinery. They offer this amazing technology with scientific precision, almost like a medical laboratory, but in no way does that jeopardise the legacy of the artisan and the use of exclusive inlays and materials.

“Working with them is truly a collaborative process. I love that I can call Bernd really early on in a project, sometimes before we have been appointed, and say, ‘This is the brief what do you think? How long would it take? What are your thoughts?’ and he is immediately ready to help us pitch for the project. I trust INTERIOR-iD and we need each other to be successful. Sure, there are a few other joinery companies that can provide the same quality, but when the quality of workmanship is backed up by that kind of relationship it’s really quite special. That is what sets them apart.

“I was so thrilled when they tendered and won the commission to produce the joinery for Project Pinehurst. It’s a complex, amazing project and we very much pushed for them because when INTERIOR-iD gets appointed on a job I can rest easy. There will be tough deadlines, there will be samples we won’t agree on, but ultimately there’s a trusting friendship and transparent business relationship there with no ego involved.

“This is not a business that I’m building to sell in five years. My aim is to stay an independent studio not beholden to anyone else. Do we want to grow? Yes, but the aim is measured growth without compromising our quality of service and delivery. In ten years time I would love to own a property, ideally a mews house, where clients can be discreetly dropped off by their chauffeur and whisked into an environment that reflects our impeccable design capabilities. Collectively, we are a company that has a huge amount of experience, but equally we are a very young business that brings a fresh, trend-setting, engaging element to any project. Most of our clients return to us because we deliver on time, on budget, and we are professional to the core.”

Above: Headboard in specialist resin finish.
Right: Marble handle with polished nickel frame.
It is ten years since Bernd and Johann Radaschitz launched their master joinery company, INTERIOR-iD from the bedroom of Bernd’s flat in Notting Hill. From those modest beginnings with only one member of staff they now run a highly acclaimed global business employing twenty five full time employees in the studio in London, alongside forty craftsmen in the family run factory in Austria.

Back in 2006 the joinery commissions undertaken by the embryonic company had limited budgets of £5-£10,000, while today those budgets have grown exponentially and can almost be unlimited. They coordinate as many as twenty to thirty projects a year, installing bespoke joinery in grand houses and apartments in London’s most distinguished postcodes and around the world. Their company now ranks in the finite top echelon of master joinery companies based in the UK.

What is it that allowed INTERIOR-iD to reach this climactic success in just ten years? Certainly ambition and drive have played an enormous part, but their swift ascent owes itself to the inherited passion for superlative craftsmanship, that was instilled at an early age; home was a flat sited above the joinery business started by their great grandfather in 1923. When you add the enduring qualities of reliability, dependability and utter professionalism you can see why they have become one of the most sought after, outstanding joinery companies in this sphere of the property market. Equally crucial are the relationships they have forged with their clients, with interior designers, architects and preeminent building contractors. Their reputation for combining peerless business acumen with genuine politeness is acknowledged within the industry.

Modestly Bernd begins to tell the story of the last decade. “In the early years we were mainly known for delivering superb craftsmanship and sublime quality, and this hasn’t changed of course” says Bernd, “but, in addition, we are now renowned for providing first class project management services from our London base. In the incredibly high-end market our clients want the reassurance of smooth service and stability throughout the project, starting from the very early stages of planning through to installation. But our role no longer ends there; we now provide a valued after sales care which has become an enviable asset.

“Perhaps surprisingly the number of projects we handle each year hasn’t changed that much, but what has changed significantly is the scope of the projects. In the past we may have done just one or two rooms, a kitchen or a dressing room in a house or apartment, but as our client base has expanded over the years, so has the scope and scale of the projects. The growing awareness of our reputation for outstanding quality has meant that clients are now happy to appoint us with the
whole project. As well as luxury private residences we have now moved into working with high-end property developers, such as Luxlo, and that diversity has automatically increased the magnitude of work and the financial value of the contracts.

*The majority of our current projects are situated in prime central London. There is an extensive house in Mayfair’s Upper Grosvenor Street that is currently being restored by MWAI, and a unique house in Belgrave Square, which is being refurbished by Szibred Construction and due for completion soon. Plus the award winning Luxlo development, ‘77 Mayfair’ of seven magnificent apartments in South Audley Street will be finished this autumn. This prestigious development had a fantastic team on board; the lifestyle designer Martin Kemp, architects Square & Partners, and the building contractor McLaren, who together represent the pinnacle of the high quality residential property industry. It has been an excellent project and no doubt helped to introduce us to other luxury developers.*

*Overseas, our contracts include a Polo club in St Tropez conceived by Martin Kemp Design, a contemporary new build house in Guernsey as well as a Carlisle Design Studio project in Lagos. But I am really proud to announce that we are working on our first two major projects outside London, one designed by the interior designers at Elicyon and the other by Katharine Pooley Design Studio, both on a prestigious estate in Surrey. The work is going to be stunning – think of James Bond moving into a castle - it’s going to be fantastic.*

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**One of the major innovations that Bernd is passionate about is the recent introduction of a sample showroom. This unique joinery library is dedicated to showcasing the endless permutations of wood samples, the variety of specialist finishes and exquisite marquetry, showing the endless permutations of wood samples, as well as many different metal and stone samples, antique mirror, gold or silver leaf finishes. As he says, “designers and clients find it inspiring and magical, it’s antique mirror, gold or silver leaf finishes. As he says, “designers and clients find it inspiring and magical, it’s* *antique mirror, gold or silver leaf finishes. As he says, “designers and clients find it inspiring and magical, it’s* *antique mirror, gold or silver leaf finishes. As he says, “designers and clients find it inspiring and magical, it’s antique mirror, gold or silver leaf finishes. 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It sounds like the opening sentence of a bad joke, when in 2009 an Englishman, an Irishman and a Welshman decided it was a good idea to leave their well paid jobs to set up a building company in the depths of the recession, when there was virtually no building work available. However, their timing, like a good joke has proved to be fortuitous and rewarding.

Darren Size, 41, spent his childhood in Kildare, south of Dublin; Barry Breed, 44 grew up in South London; while Ian Jones, 61 hails from the Valleys outside Cardiff, but together they have proved to be a formidable entrepreneurial trio. From a less than auspicious beginning, when many viewed their venture as either brave or foolish, in just seven years they have transformed their company, Sizebreed into an esteemed and profitable construction business with an annual turnover of over £50million.

Darren begins to tell their story. “We met at a company called Holloway White Allom, who were probably the number one player in the luxury residential market at that time. I was there for 11 years, Barry for 16 and Ian was there for 30. We had all worked our way up to director level, but interestingly Barry started life as a carpenter, I was originally a quantity surveyor and Ian started as an engineer. So, we had three distinctly different, yet unifying, skill sets.

“Ian is primarily an investor nowadays. He sits on the board and retains a shareholding, but he isn’t involved day-to-day as he lives in New Zealand with his young family, only returning to the UK for about two months each year. He’s very good at planning projects, which he does remotely, plus he’s a great mentor to our younger staff. Barry spends a lot of his time on client relationships and business development these days, whilst I act as both MD and FD for the business.”

The early stages proved to be arduous, demanding and required a resolute spirit. “For the first year Barry and I had lunch together nearly every day because nobody would talk to us! Literally it was the two of us, staring at each other and squabbling like an old married couple. Like most start-ups, we knocked on a lot of doors before we found our first job. Thankfully, we had no overheads apart from rent for two desks in the office of our friend Randle Siddeley, the renowned landscape designer, and we didn’t draw a salary for two years, which was hard for our families, but worth it in the end.”

Perversely, it was the financial misfortune of other building contractors that led to Sizebreed’s early prosperity. “Three of our early jobs came about because other builders went bust or walked away. The first was a six-storey house in Belgravia where the client had excavated a basement, started a full refurbishment, and then fell out with the contractor. Rain was pouring through the roof, there were pipes and wires everywhere. We took on the challenge and finished it very successfully. The second was a similar situation: a private house in South Kensington where the contractor was desperately trying to

**Right:** Master bathroom featuring antique gold glass display cabinet, gold mesh glass and floating shelves.
exceptional, so the quality of the finished houses was bust and left the site in mayhem. The redeeming feature was a private house in Mayfair, where the builder went complete the construction but had financial difficulties £5 million. Currently the biggest project we have has a Maintenance and Special Projects departments, which start at £100,000 and can rise to £3-4 million. These jobs relationships with some of the best families in London. for the right client, and this allows us to maintain excellent bulb, mow the lawn, service the boiler or clean the pool we do everything we can to make the whole process as handover to our clients. Once the owners have moved in, the house is truly ready for occupation and oversee the success. They get involved before the completion of each International Projects); Maintenance and Timber flooring. Superman! The rest, as they say, is history.

“What sets us apart from our competitors? I guess it’s a home for a private client.” Like many businesses which work within the world of uber-wealthy clients, Sizwblack never disclose the identity of any of their clients, but recent commissions have included a 22,000sq.ft. new build mansion designed by Adam Architecture as well as a contemporary home in Oxfordshire designed by the American architect Richard Meier. Proof, if it was needed, that Sizwblack are working with some of the most esteemed designers in the world.

“In London we have projects in Belgravia, Kensington, Chelsea and Mayfair. Outside of the capital we have jobs in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire, while internationally, we have a ski chalet in Meribel and two summer homes in the South of France.” What sets us apart from our competitors? I guess the fundamental difference is that we only work for private clients on extremely high quality, super prime residences, so we have become exceptionally focused on the extraordinary quality of the finished home and attending to our clients every need, however demanding they may be. A further profound distinction is the unrivalled personal service that our clients receive.

“Intermediate”-it’s engineers have been exceptionally talented and easy to work with, and they certainly understand quality. A few of our team have been to visit the workshops in Austria and were impressed by the excellent facilities and workmanship during the manufacturing process. Their fitters are on site now, so we don’t have a finished product to judge, but from everything we have seen so far they have proved to be an excellent choice. Over the last few years Bernd and his team have been moving ever closer to working within the preeminent league of joiners in the UK. I know that’s where he wants to be and he’s heading in the right direction.”

“This poses the question, ‘Why doesn’t everyone in construction want to work in the luxury prime property market?’ Darren’s answer is revelatory. “People assume it must be incredibly financially rewarding because of the extreme sums of money involved, but because it’s so time intensive, and so many things can go wrong, it simply isn’t that easy. If you want to make lots of money in our industry, you do development or volume. We do a small number of totally bespoke projects that often take a really long time to complete, so while we do make a reasonable return, the true reward is in delivering the most amazing private residences, for some of the most demanding people in the world.”

“What’s next? We have always said that we don’t want to be the biggest, but unsurprisingly we do want to be the best. Our business has settled at a comfortable size, so our aim is to finesse our talent at delivering the best possible quality and service to our clients. We have no control over the property market, and there is obviously a lot of uncertainty in the aftermath of Brexit, but there are always opportunities for the right company. In essence we wish to continue to work on the highest specification projects for premium clients and to be acknowledged as the number one firm working at the highest quality in London and the surrounding areas. I believe it’s inevitable that we will do more international work, but we won’t be aggressively targeting the overseas market. Our focus will always will be London. Ultimately our goal is more of the same, which can only be good.

complete the construction but had financial difficulties and eventually went bankrupt. Unfortunately, there was bad work everywhere, sub-contractors who hadn’t been paid and all kinds of complex technical issues. The third was a private house in Mayfair, where the builder went bust and left the site in mayhem. The redeeming feature was that the designs of all three schemes were exceptional, so the quality of the finished houses was impeccable. All three jobs proved to be propitious for us, once we had overcome the initial issues left behind.

“At that point we were becoming specialists in finishing other peoples jobs, which was definitely not the plan, but it allowed us to build an amazing portfolio of finished work very quickly. The owner of the house in Belgravia also allowed us to use her house as a marketing platform. She used to meet our prospective clients and tell them how great we were, often referring to Barry as Superman! The rest, as they say, is history.

“These days our business is basically split into five divisions: London Construction; Country House Construction; Special Projects (which includes International Projects); Maintenance and Timber flooring.

“Our maintenance team are a crucial part of our success. They got involved before the completion of each construction project, helping our site team ensure that the house is truly ready for occupation and oversee the handover to our clients. Once the owners have moved in, we do everything we can to make the whole process as easy as possible for them. We will literally change a light bulb, run the lawn, service the boiler or clean the pool for the right client, and this allows us to maintain excellent relationships with some of the best families in London.

“Projects commissions have budgets that start at £100,000 and can rise to £3-4 million. These jobs tend to be for repeat clients. Barry runs both the Maintenance and Special Projects departments, which allows him to stay very close to Sizwblack’s key customers.

“Our Construction jobs start from approximately £5 million. Currently the biggest project we have has a budget of £25 million, but there really is no limit as long as it’s a home for a private client.” Like many businesses which work within the world of ultra-wealthy clients, Sizwblack never disclose the identity of any of their clients, but recent commissions have included a 22,000sq.ft. new build mansion designed by Adam Architecture as well as a contemporary home in Oxfordshire designed by the American architect Richard Meier. Proof, if it was needed, that Sizwblack are working with some of the most esteemed designers in the world.

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“Now, Barry or I are involved in every job. Our references are outstanding, so when a client asks for a referee, we don’t simply send two or three, we forward a list of every job we have ever done.

“From the very beginning we have never really had to advertise or make a determined effort to bring in work. What we have done is fostered relationships with interior designers, architects, project managers, quantity surveyors, even estate agents and lawyers, anyone who might get that first contact with a high net worth client. Equally, enquiries come directly, sometimes from friends of previous clients, even from people who have walked past our sites, noticed that they are uniquely well presented and that our team are certain they understand quality. A few of our team have been to visit the workshops in Austria and were impressed by the excellent facilities and workmanship during the manufacturing process. Their fitters are on site now, so we don’t have a finished product to judge, but from everything we have seen so far they have proved to be an excellent choice. Over the last few years Bernd and his team have been moving ever closer to working within the preeminent league of joiners in the UK. I know that’s where he wants to be and he’s heading in the right direction.”

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Top left: Master dressing room with feature doors in specialist resin and antique Top left: Master dressing room with feature doors in specialist resin and antique gold finish. Left: Wardrobe detail showing hand-veneered walnut starburst and polished nickel inlays.
Case study

Cheyne Place, London

ARCHITECT
MWAI

LOOSE INTERIORS
Woolf Interior

JOINERY SCOPE
INTERIOR-iD
Kitchen
Bathrooms
Bedrooms
Dressing Room
Study
Living Room
Media Room
Bar/Brass Hall
This recently renovated exquisite Victorian townhouse located in Cheyne Place, Chelsea was the result of another successful collaboration with the architects of MWAI and high-end residential building contractor, Grangewood.

Working closely with the designers at MWAI, INTERIOR-iD manufactured all the joinery throughout the house including the exceptional burr walnut veneer in the entrance hall and living areas, the floating shelves and worktop for the study, as well as the fitted wardrobes and integrated bar in the living room. Furthermore, we supplied and installed the bespoke wardrobes for the master dressing room, as well as a curved bespoke vanity unit for the master bathroom.

An additional highlight is the outstanding kitchen designed by MWAI using a unique blue dyed veneer in a smooth matt lacquer finish, which blends perfectly with the seamless stainless steel worktop. This bespoke kitchen also showcases several sophisticated design details, which proved to be so successful that some elements of these designs will be used as creative inspiration for our new Haute Couture Kitchens division (more details in pages 34–35).

The appointment to work on Cheyne Place created yet another wonderful opportunity for our London-based engineers and the craftsmen in our Austrian workshops to excel at delivering exceptional joinery using innovative and sophisticated materials with skill and remarkable craftsmanship.

It is now possible for clients, architects and interior designers to view the new showcase cabinets that have been installed in our Notting Hill studio which visibly demonstrate the wide variety of materials, finishes and possibilities that are available to use across all the elements of bespoke joinery and kitchens.
At what age did you realise you wished to become an architect?

I suppose for me it was being good at the constituent parts of being an architect while I was at school, so it was an almost natural choice. During the school holidays from the age of 16 I worked as a draughtsman at a local architect’s practice in Guernsey. That experience ignited my passion and solidified the determination to work in this field. It was quite simply the only thing I wanted to do. My generation of architects are very lucky. We are just old enough to be part of the era that learnt to draft by hand, whilst still young enough to be termed a ‘digital native’, having grown up when technology was evolving. Our background is grounded in traditional techniques and processes but at the same time we are comfortable with ever-evolving digital technologies.

Did your career path follow a traditional trajectory?

I suppose the answer to that is both yes, and no. I went to The Oxford School of Architecture at Oxford Brookes University and graduated with a first class honours degree. For my fourth year, which is spent in practice, I was interviewed to join the world-renowned architectural firm Foster and Partners and rather wonderfully I was later offered the job. So far, the career path was very promising and predictable. But then fate took an unusual turn. On the way home after the interview, I was on a train, on the phone to a friend discussing how the interview had gone. After the call, the lady sitting next to me on the train said, ‘Sorry to have listened in, but I hear you are an architect, is that your portfolio? Can I have a look? After flicking through my portfolio she said, ‘Please come and work for me in San Francisco.’ Perhaps surprising for someone relatively conventional, I met her business partner the next day in Oxford; her secretary arranged a visa and a few months later I was working in San Francisco. Of course, I had to call Fosters and decline the job. They predictably said, ‘a) do you realise how many people apply and b) it is not very often that people turn us down.’ Not accepting their offer could have been a catastrophic career error, but I believe working in San Francisco for that year designing healthcare buildings and schools was a fascinating life-enhancing experience and so very different to the residential commissions I’m doing now.

Richard Bell, 35 is an accomplished architect renowned for his strict and minimal approach to designing some of London’s most beautiful contemporary properties. His focus is to create simple spaces that possess a natural elegance.
What was it like working with INTERIOR-iD? Historically, I have worked with quite small cabinet-makers and joiners, who have not produced much in the way of detailed shop drawings. While many have been great craftsmen, the lack of those detailed shop drawings could often lead to unpredictable results. In order to prevent this occurring, I have always done my own meticulous joinery drawings to ensure that I, and the client, get exactly what is required. The advantage of working with Bernd and the team at INTERIOR-iD is that they have an in-house drawing department. More importantly, the team possess prodigious knowledge and experience allowing them to immeasurably add to the design process. My experience in drafting joinery drawings enabled me to view things from their perspective, but equally, many of the team at INTERIOR-iD are quite architecturally minded. They simply seem to, ‘get it’ straightaway. They immediately understand why I might want to conceal some things and reveal others. This made our working relationship effortless and highly efficient. From the feedback I received they thoroughly enjoyed creating some simple, yet very beautifully crafted pieces. They were responsible for all the interior joinery within the project from a freestanding table to the wine cellar, the kitchen, the gym furniture, a spa bench, lots of wooden panelling some of the doors and framing. In truth they created everything. Rather wonderfully, they also won this extensive commission on a competitive tender.

Can you define what makes INTERIOR-iD so special? It's really very simple. Every single member of the team, from the person who is doing the drawings in the London studio, to the person who is doing the cutting of the timber in Austria, is trying to execute each component of the process to the absolute best of their ability. If they have an in-house drawing department. More importantly, the team possess prodigious knowledge and experience allowing them to immeasurably add to the design process. My experience in drafting joinery drawings enabled me to view things from their perspective, but equally, many of the team at INTERIOR-iD are quite architecturally minded. They simply seem to, ‘get it’ straightaway. They immediately understand why I might want to conceal some things and reveal others. This made our working relationship effortless and highly efficient. From the feedback I received they thoroughly enjoyed creating some simple, yet very beautifully crafted pieces. They were responsible for all the interior joinery within the project from a freestanding table to the wine cellar, the kitchen, the gym furniture, a spa bench, lots of wooden panelling some of the doors and framing. In truth they created everything. Rather wonderfully, they also won this extensive commission on a competitive tender.

I would love to work with them again. The fact that their factory is situated in Austria is irrelevant. Their delivery system is so precise and faultless that a consignment leaves on a Friday afternoon and arrives at 8am on a Tuesday. And it will be 8am, not 9am. It’s amazingly efficient and utterly professional. Are you defined by a personal style of architecture? I am known for designing very simple, uncomplicated spaces. I’m sure if anyone looks at my website they will see similarities in style between projects. This is completely natural, as even on a subliminal level one is bound to create a certain signature. However, I would never try to intentionally apply a distinct, ‘house style’, to any of the commissions I work on. This could be very dangerous; there are enough constraints in architecture without making your own style a limitation! What I would say is that I have a consistency of approach. I always try to really pare things down to the minimum as a starting point, both in terms of detail and materiality. Executing simple things exceptionally well is what I try and do. In fact this can be a problem when working on very high value residential work. There is sometimes an expectation that things should ‘look expensive’ and that more embellishment means more value. I’m not a fan of this, so my approach, in these situations, is to maintain simplicity to the design. I prefer to introduce some rather more special materials, still retaining a limited material palette.

Working with exceptional craftsmen, like the team at INTERIOR-iD, means I am able to design simple things confidently because they execute the work so well. The delight is that the majority of people truly appreciate the inherent value. It is a well-acknowledged fact within the industry that those details, which may appear to be the most minimal, are often the most complex and complicated to design and execute. Sometimes the most beautiful architecture and design will not hit you in the face, in fact some of the best design reveals itself in layers as you spend more time with it. That is the ideology and guiding principle behind my work. Light is a very important aspect, too. If the siting of a project makes a space naturally dark, then rather than fight against that, I try to create a beautiful dark space. Obviously, the same formula works in reverse. I try not to fight the dynamics of light, but to enhance and compliment it. How much of the architectural design are you responsible for? Generally, I design and execute absolutely everything that is fixed to the building, together with the odd thing that isn’t. If the client asks me to design the cutlery, that’s fine. As an architect working in the residential field, I have never separated architecture from interior design. In my view, the two can never be divorced from each other; they are part of the same discipline. The architecture can be a blank canvas onto which a lifestyle can play out or it can be very specific to a particular client. What I find extremely sad is ‘lifestyle creation’ - buying in a job lot of objet d’art not personal to a client or relevant to the architecture. I have been lucky that my private clients have generally been discerning in terms of their taste, and my developer clients have never been too prescriptive. But then I suppose any client tries to pick an architect whose work aligns with how they want to live and what style of home they envision living in.

Are client requests changing? The public at large are becoming much more design aware and clearly this can only be a good thing. There is also a growing appreciation of craftsmanship, provenance and sourcing where people are buying into the story behind design and manufacture and this is tremendously good for our industry. However, in my opinion the standard of design at the very high value end of the developer-led London property market has occasionally been surprisingly low for some time now. Expensive materials and a lot of decoration conceal average design. I think some developers have become complacent because with property values so high they feel that the differential added by fine design is neither relevant, nor significant. Interestingly, within the middle and lower end of the property market, you will find many accomplished designers using their talents to create masterly imaginative design. I think this is starting to change though. At the very top end of the London residential property, clients are becoming more discerning and less willing to settle for identikit ‘business hotel chain’ luxury. Were you inspired by the work of other architects? From an historical point of view, the work of Adolf Loos is certainly an influence for me in terms of approach. He was an influential architect of the late 19th century whose buildings were rigorous examples of minimalist beauty. In a now famous lecture entitled “Ornament and Crime”, he argued that ornament had no meaning or place within contemporary culture, even going so far as to argue that ornament actually hindered society’s progress. He advocated for simplicity and he used beautiful materials in very simple ways.

What do you hope the future will bring? I would prefer to remain small so that each project can get the level of attention that it deserves. My aim is to try not to work exclusively in the very high value end of the residential market, as what is primarily important to me is the design aspiration of the client, whatever their budget. Ultimately it is rewarding to work for people who understand and appreciate good design. Potentially I would like to do a bit more work internationally. I have recently done a couple of spa projects and they have been hugely enjoyable. I would welcome the opportunity to do more of these. I also wouldn’t mind stepping outside the boundaries of residential architecture, perhaps designing in the retail sphere, maybe a perfume shop or a fashion boutique, those would be great projects to do.
Behind the scenes, London

Our studio in Notting Hill is far more than a business headquarters. Here we can take you through the creative world of bespoke joinery and its limitless possibilities. From this central location the Project Management team oversees each project from the early commission stages, through the technical design process, to delivery and installation either within the UK or internationally.

This year within the studio we have established a remarkable sample wall that displays a wonderful joinery library for designers, interior architects and clients. The showroom features an infinite selection of wood samples, specialist finishes, exquisite marquetry, alongside a vast selection of metal and stone samples, antique mirror finishes and gold or silver leaf detailing. Here we can demonstrate the immeasurable options available from INTERIOR-iD.

An equally important new addition is the ingenious permanent showcase cabinet, which features actual size kitchen and wardrobe units. These are categorised into three groups: platinum, gold and the silver to reflect the different levels of specifications, materials, types of hinges and finishes. Naturally, they are all of the highest quality, however each group represents and easily defines the possible cost variations. This major innovation enables us to convey the craftsmanship, the skills and the superior level of service we offer. These cutting edge advances facilitate the incredible level of choice we offer to our clients and is one of our most valuable assets.

But the use of the sample library and the showcase cabinets extends much further than that, as both are also used as a valuable part of our regular CPD presentations. They will undoubtedly help us achieve our ultimate ambition to fulfil every client’s vision. For more information or to book a CPD session, please contact our offices.
As David Voskou says, “each kitchen will be like a work of art. Working on developing this new division with Bernd will combine all my great passions: the chemistry of blending ingredients together to produce a fabulous dish and the thrill of creating exceptional furniture.”

Within the London studio we possess the expertise and the technical skills to create exceptional bespoke kitchens enhanced by a complete aftercare and maintenance service. The entire process is co-ordinated by David Voskou from the initial commission, through the design process and creation within the Austrian workshops, to completion. As each kitchen is designed and custom made, there are virtually no restrictions in style or in the choice of materials. Our master craftsmen are experts at integrating a variety of materials including wood, glass, metal, stone leather and textiles and we will unite these skills with complex and high-tech kitchen specifications to create kitchens where the quality is beyond comparison, there is exceptional attention to detail and a rare level of consummate professionalism.

Designing and building kitchens is an inherent part of our historic Austrian legacy and we are very proud to offer this service to our international clients alongside our existing joinery services.

In collaboration with the MWAI design house, we have developed two distinctive kitchen styles (and a third style currently in planning phase) which are displayed in our offices.

There is a ‘Contemporary’ style, ‘Classic’ and ‘English’ style. They merely function as design guidance for our clients who are often overwhelmed with the wide choice of materials and finishes. However, every interior designer or architect is invited to come and create with us a completely new concept design if requested.

Every kitchen project we undertake is artfully tailored to reflect the client’s lifestyle, discerning taste and to blend with the environment. David concludes, “I strongly believe that what makes us different is that we offer a complete tailored end-to-end solution for our clients. This means a step-by-step process from design assistance, technical drawings, project management, manufacture, installation and after care, whilst being on hand to offer advice at every stage.”

An important part of the concept includes liaising with all the leading kitchen appliance providers such as Sub-Zero & Wolf, Gaggenau, and Grand Cuisine. The price of each Haute Couture Kitchen is determined by the specification of the design, the myriad materials involved and the appliances. In fact, the selected appliances will always be a crucial part of the project and budget.

We will constantly stretch our imagination, our technology and manufacturing techniques to ensure we continue to provide our private clients with a superior and almost unparalleled level of service which makes all the difference in the high-end residential market.
Your favourite room
My kitchen. It’s the hub of the house and where the culinary magic happens.

The books on your bedside table
Dusty! I don’t get as much time as I’d like to read nowadays.

A movie you saw recently
The Jungle Book with my children. It took me straight back to my childhood.

The sight that inspires you
Nothing makes me feel more patriotic or awestruck than the view of the British coastline.

Your favourite restaurant
Skye Gyngell’s wonderful Spring is perfection, serving delicious, seasonal food located in the historic setting of Somerset House.

The last music you bought
The new album from Birdy, the talented British singer, songwriter and musician, who is renowned for her emotional, often melancholic and poignant songs.

Your favourite shop
The always fascinating Fenwick of New Bond Street. It’s my first destination on any shopping trip.

Your career in a parallel universe
I would be a yoga teacher, but I would almost certainly have to run my own yoga studio!

An indulgence I would never forego
Skiing as often as possible. Nothing beats the mountain air, the delight brought by a fresh fall of snow, the challenge and buzz of being so close to nature – not to mention the thrill of whizzing down the slopes, followed by a delicious meal.

Your greatest extravagance
A Brora cashmere poncho that was accidentally shrunk and is now worn with great pride by my 12-year-old daughter.

Your favourite journey
Walking across the Himalayas through Nepal. Beautiful people and incredible scenery.

When do you lie
I’m not sure that this even counts as truly telling a lie, but I never reveal my age to anyone!

Your great regret
Not taking the opportunity to travel the world between leaving college and starting my career.

When and where are you happiest
Whenever I am with my family. There is simply nothing better.

The talent you would most like to have
To be able to sing effortlessly like Adele. Singing is a magical God-given talent. It brings so much pleasure to the world and reflects every human emotion.

What would you change about yourself
Making more ‘me’ time.

Your most treasured possession
My health. Without that, nothing else matters. You can have all the financial rewards and critical success, but if you are not physically and mentally well those achievements cease to mean anything.

You’re most marked characteristic
My boundless enthusiasm.

Your hero in life
My late uncle Derek Shrub – zero to hero! He started life as a doorman at the V&A and ended his career on the board at Sotheby’s and the V&A.

Your motto
If you don’t ask, you don’t get, but always ensure you demonstrate compassion.